Proposed Development Plan for the

St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area

Prepared by DPA Consulting Ltd. March 1983 Fredericton N.B.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN
for the
ST. CROIX WATERWAY RECREATION AREA
SUMMARY REPORT

PREPARED FOR:

Management Committee
St. Croix Waterway
Recreation Area

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The St. Croix - McAdam area of southwestern New Brunswick has been experiencing economic decline for the past several years. The continuing demise of McAdam as a railway servicing centre and interchange point, and the closure of the Georgia-Pacific plywood mill coupled with secondary displacements in the service sector have underscored the necessity to diversify the economic base of the region.

The area is however, endowed with numerous lakes and streams in a panoramic setting and also includes one of the best canoeing rivers in eastern Canada. Sparsely populated, the region supports a plethora of small and large game, the lakes are amply stocked with fish and the terrain presents abundant recreational opportunities for the adventurist, day-tripper or family group.

Accordingly, a specific area within the region has been set aside and designated by Order-in-Council, under the Community Improvement Corporation Act as the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area. DPA Consulting Limited was tasked with the preparation of a conceptual plan to provide a framework for rational long-term development geared towards improving recreational use of the area, but at a scale undetrimental to the resource base.

The course of the study has been guided by the Inter-departmental Management Committee on the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area. At present, representation on the Committee includes members from the following departments and agencies:

- Community Improvement Corporation (chair)
- Department of Youth and Recreation
- Department of the Environment
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Historical and Cultural Resources
- Department of Tourism

The overall objective of the Development Plan is:

> "To facilitate management of the "St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area" in terms of accessibility and recreational use of the waterway and associated lands."

1.2 Goals

The goals of the project are:

1. To encourage tourism based on identified themes, with resultant economic spinoffs to area and province.
2. To protect and manage an increasingly valuable, diminishing natural recreational resource for current and future usage.
3. To protect and promote awareness of New Brunswick heritage (both Indian and early European settlement).

1.3 The Study Area

The study area generally includes the Canadian portion of the Chiputneticook Lake System Watershed area and the eastern bank of the St. Croix River. The area is bounded by the International Boundary between the State of Maine and the Province of New Brunswick to the west; Highway 122 to the north; the Canadian Pacific Railway to the east; and Highway 4 to the south.

The 1200 square kilometer land base, largely owned by Georgia-Pacific Corporation supports a regional population of approximately 8000 persons, mostly concentrated in the Village of McAdam and the Town of St. Stephen. The terrain and soil characteristics of the area are poorly suited for agricultural purposes and the major economic activity is forest harvesting, primarily to support local and U.S. mills.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to prepare a Development Plan which provides a framework for rational long term development of the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area. Within the context of a framework, the study presents concepts, guidelines and recommendations for further action on the part of various sectors, both public and private.

The Proposed Development Plan should be considered to be the nucleus for detailed planning and the promotion of increased recreational use of the region which will stimulate activities and capital investment geared towards revitalizing its economic diversity and enhancing employment opportunities for its residents.

2. DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

2.1 Activities

The topography and physical features of the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area are ideally suited to support a range of activities which also enjoy a subtantial market potential.

In this regard, the Development Concept has been formulated to encourage and enhance activities such as bass fishing, canoe-camping, and hiking/skiing in the Lake Region, and downriver boating and camping on the St. Croix River.

2.2 Framework

As illustrated in Map I the Development Concept proposes the establishment of two major development nodes linked by travel corridors which are both water and land oriented.

A major development node is proposed in the immediate vicinity of Spednic Lake Provincial Park. At this site a total infrastructure package should be made available with the range of facilities to include the following: campsites and toilets; picnic area; interpretive display for the Diggity Creek Archaeological Site; and, an Information Map Board with complete graphic detail regarding possible activities, programs and the location of trail routes, canoe routes and a description of physical facilities located elswhere in the ST. Croix Waterway Recreation Area. Given the proximity of this location to the major transportation access routes and the Village of McAdam the general vicinity of this node would be an ideal location for an

equipment rental outfit, grocery store and a family oriented lodge providing facilities and a broad spectrum of programs geared towards meeting the needs of different age groups.

A significant issue which has come to light during the preparation of the development plan has been the potential difficulty for the private sector to acquire land for a base of operations within the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area.

To overcome this problem, it has been suggested that suitable lands could be acquired by the Management Committee and made available to interested parties. An arrangement of this nature would be ideally suited to support the development of a multi-faceted complex, catering to diverse user types, within a relatively confined area. Thus, high level capital investment requirements (typically access roads, parking lots, boats, docks, some structures, etc.) could be shared with a consequent reduction in total start-up and operation costs.

Similar to Spednic Lake Park, but at a slightly smaller scale, it is proposed that a limited infrastructure package be made available at North Lake Provincial Park. This site is the primary put-in point for all water-borne travellers whose ultimate destination is the lower reaches of the water-shed (Spednic Lake, Palfrey Lake) and/or the St. Croix River. Facilities available at this site should include campsites and toilets, picnic area, and, an Information Map Board. An equipment rental outlet which is a satellite of the one located in the St. Croix-McAdam area could also be developed nearby.

Small scale facilities upgrading in the longer term is proposed for secondary centres located at Skiff Lake, Forest City, St. Croix and Grand Falls. Initially, capital investment should be concentrated on improving public access to the water at these areas (eg. launch ramps, picnic sites, parking lots).

It is proposed that the Village of McAdam's role be that of a total service facility for the entire St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area. This role would include formal designation as the main service centre, which would involve visitor reception and information regarding activities and area use at a Tourist Information Centre; restaurant; fuel and auto servicing facilities; interpretive display of the archeological and heritage significance of the entire region; a tackle and/or camping equipment section as part of an existing store; and accommodations.

The proposed travel corridors are also indicated on Map I. General locations of campsites as well as the general alignment of various trails for land-based activities are shown.

As shown on the Map, the primary linear water routes include the journey from North Lake to the Headwaters of the St. Croix River; the journey from Second Eel Lake through the interior of the region into Palfrey Lake; and various other typically day long journeys along the various brooks and tributaries located in the water-shed.

The land based routes are proposed in an effort to promote hiking, back-packing and snowshoeing or cross-country skiing between North Lake Park and Spednic Lake Park. It is recognized that probably very

few individuals will undertake an intrepid journey of this nature in consideration of the distances involved. However, development of the trail system is still deemed to be worthwhile since the northern and southern extremities of this system (especially if return loops were included) would undoubtedly receive a good deal of usage.

Primary static activity areas are proposed in the vicinity of Skiff Lake; the Mount Henry/Howland Hill area and the Green Mountain Hill/Sam Foster Hill area. The topography of these areas lends itself to the development of hiking, skiing and snowmobiling trails.

The St. Croix River is considered to be a corridor in itself, primarily dedicated to the two-day journey by canoe and kayak; with the major put-in point at St. Croix; the overnight stay usually occuring in the vicinity of Loon Bay Lodge; and the pull-out point at Grand Falls. With increased usage, it is to be expected that considerable upgrading of existing and the development of new campsites will be required, especially in the Loon Bay Lodge area. Improved facilities at Grand Falls will also be needed to accommodate boat retrieval from the river.

2.2 Public Input to Management

The Interdepartmental Management Committee is responsible for coordinating the management of provincial initiatives within the SCWRA on a permanent basis.

Nevertheless, decision and policy making regarding use of the area should, to some extent, reflect the wishes and desires of the people who live and work in the region.

In order to ensure ongoing public consultation in the management process, it is recommended that a permanent advisory group, reporting to the Management Committee, be established to represent the interests of local residents and other relevant user groups (e.g. Canoe N.B., N.B. Outfitters Association, Georgia-Pacific Corporation, etc.). Representation on this group should also include one volunteer or appointee from each Local Service District or Municipality in the region.

The function of the advisory group should be to respond, on an as required basis, to requests for commentary on issues to be dealt with by the Management Committee.

3. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3.1 Opportunities

The proposed Development Concept presents opportunities for many programs and activities which, although not large on an individual basis, when considered collectively could lead to an attractive, successful and, in the operational phase, well-functioning recreation area. Accordingly, the intent of this section is to identify the scope of public investment required to initiate the development of recommended facilities and infrastructures, at the major nodes and secondary centres, which will hopefully stimulate private sector initiatives.

The projects have been divided into three categories: Infrastructure Projects, which represent capital investment initiatives in the establishment of physical plant and facilities and for which funding will likely be drawn primarily from various levels of government; Private Projects are those opportunities which the

private sector should develop and operate on a for-profit basis; Promotional Projects are non-profit endeavours geared towards encouraging visitation to the SCWRA and enhancing the user experience.

The projects are summarized in Exhibit 3-1. Detailed information regarding the nature of the Infrastructure Projects is available in the main report. The Private and Promotional Projects are briefly discussed on the following pages.

EXHIBIT 3-1: DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SUMMARY

Infrastructure Projects

1. User information centre
2. Development of land based trail system
3. Improvements to existing and development of new campsites
4. Interpretation Centre
5. Construction of Picnic pull-offs on access routes
6. Excavation of archaeological sites
7. Search and rescue coordination centres
8. Brush clearance in small brooks to promote development of canoe routes
9. Detailed inventory and mapping of St. Croix River
10. Completion of Spednic Lake Park
11. Improvements to North Lake Park
12. Investigate, survey and clear connections to provincial long distance trail network

Private Projects

1. Improvements to existing outfitters facilities

2. Development of accomodations in McAdam

3. Camping equipment/tackle shop

4. Shuttle service

5. Pursuit centre

6. Outward Bound school

7. Family lodge

8. Outfitter Mall Complex

Promotional Projects

1. Development of attraction oriented highway signage system

2. Production of promotional and information literature

3. Investigation of historic travel routes

4. Railway/lumbering festival

5. International river race

3.2 Project Descriptions
Private Projects

Existing outfitters' facilities are considered to be inadequate especially for the support of winter activities. These facilities require renovation, landscaping and winterizing in order to attract the high-income market segment. The implementation priority for this project is considered to be immediate to short term, and the plan of action should include: an inventory of the condition of existing facilities; the determination of the extent and viability of the improvements necessary; design and priorization of the required work; and possibly, development of a cost sharing system between the private operators and the public sector.

The Village of McAdam has been recommended as a service centre for the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area. As such, the Village is well located and fairly well serviced to meet the needs of expected visitors. However there is a lack of good quality accommodations in the area and it would appear that there is an opportunity to develop a small hotel or motel with dining room/lounge facilities.

Most visitors to the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area will likely come either fully equipped or require extensive outfitting. In the latter case it is expected that private concession operators are best suited to stock and lease the necessary equipment. Nevertheless, it would appear that there is also an opportunity for a local store owner to carry a limited line of camping equipment and fishing tackle as part of his summer inventory to meet the needs of the self-sufficient visitor who will, nevertheless, ocassionally need

replacement equipment. The best location for such an initiative is probably in the Village of McAdam where there are several building supplies/hardware stores with space for a supplementary inventory of this nature.

The physical characteristics of the terrain and the water bodies in the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area present abundant opportunity for linear travel, which, in the case of the St. Croix River, becomes a necessity. The bane of the wilderness traveller is the requirement to shuttle vehicles back and forth between the commencement and termination point of the journey, in addition to the fact that vehicles must often be left in isolated areas where they are subject to vandalism and/or theft. There is thus a good opportunity for the private sector to provide transportation for people, boats and equipment between St. Croix and Grand Falls on the St. Croix River and between North Lake and Spednic Lake Parks, and points in between, in the Lake System. The availability of such a service will undoubtedly increase the range of possibilities to boat users and hikers, etc. This service could be implemented immediately subject to appropriate promotion of the idea and the acquisition by an entrepreneur of a suitable van and boat trailer.

The St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area is ideally suited to adventure type training geared towards pushing the limits of individual human endurance. Several centres, called Pursuit Centres, which cater to this type of experience are in existance in Europe. A centre of this nature could be established within the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area (a potential location could be St. Croix) in the medium term if a suitable proponent can be located.

Similarly to the pursuit centre concept, an Outward Bound School could provide outdoor adventure group training geared towards promoting leadership and problem solving skills. Outward Bound Schools are located in various areas throughout Canada and the world. The ideal location for the administrative facilities for the school would be in McAdam.

Given the increased trend in family vacations it would appear that there is a good opportunity for the establishment of a Family Lodge with facilities and activity programs suitable for family groups. The focus of the programs could be on "outdoor" education and environmental awareness similiar to the programs conducted by the Atlantic Centre for the Environment. The family lodge could be incorporated in the Outfitter Mall concept.

The Management Committee may be able to acquire access to land to provide a base suitable for supporting several outfitters or lodge operators in a relatively concentrated area. Ideally an Outfitter mall complex could be located on Spednic Lake.

Promotional Projects

The key to encouraging the motoring public to leave the highway system lies in creating attractive signage which is eye-catching, interesting and informative. A coordinated effort evaluating arresting graphic design and proper location of signage with respect to exits is required.

Successfull promotion of the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area will require the production of informative literature geared towards highlighting the major access routes, trail systems, campsite locations, services available within the area, specific attractions and points of interest, etc. Additionally, a calendar of significant activities and festivals should be published on an annual basis.

Many canoeists are interested in retracing historical travel routes. The St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area was used extensively by natives and early settlers in the past. Many of their primary trading routes have been traced and recorded by explorers in various documents (e.g. W.F. Ganong's Journals). These records should be evaluated by an historian and the routes described and surveyed for the potential use of those wishing to renact history.

The history of the McAdam area is steeped in the lore of railway development and lumbering camps. It would appear that the historical background of the area would provide ample scope to develop an annual festival celebrating the importance of lumbering and railway activity in the past.

From 1974 to 1979 a canoe/kayak race was held on the lower reaches of the St. Croix River. However, the race was terminated because of the difficult stretch of rapids below the Milltown dam and a lack of sufficient rescue capabilities. It is believed that if an international river race were to be held on the upper reaches of the St. Croix (example: from Vanceboro down to an appropriate finish point) it would prove to be a popular event with canoeists drawn from a large area.

A volunteer committee, with representation from local canoe clubs, would be the ideal nucleus for generation the initiative necessary to undertake this project.

3.3 Conclusion

Development of the St. Croix Waterway Recreation Area will require that public agencies provide sufficient infrastructure to encourage private sector investment.

If all of the identified projects were to be implemented, the employment created would result in a maximum incremental addition of approximately 13 full-time positions and in the order of 80 seasonal jobs, depending upon the scale of operations at various facilities. The seasonal jobs could be phased over several years, but at a lower total employment level. Additionally, many of the projects are developmental in nature and will likely lead to greater and more permanent employment and economic benefits.

Thus for benefits to accrue to the area, there must be a high degree of public/private sector cooperation and joint development.